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CDPH Awarded Grant for Child Passenger Safety

SACRAMENTO - Motor vehicle crashes continue to be the number one cause of death for children. The California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Vehicle Occupant Safety Program (VOSP) has just received a \$309,074 grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, funded through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, to help inform parents about the life-saving benefit of car seats and booster seat use. VOSP plays a central coordinating role in addressing California's Child Passenger Safety (CPS) programs, creating essential partnerships that link state and local policy, enforcement, and educational efforts to increase proper child restraint use.

According to Dr. Ron Chapman, CDPH director and state health officer, "this funding will allow VOSP to provide technical assistance to all 61 of California's local health department Child Passenger Safety Programs, and 2,000 certified child passenger safety technicians who deliver a variety of technical and educational services to the public on how to choose and properly install car seats." VOSP will also distribute educational materials and safety seats to all county Child Passenger Safety Programs, and collaborate with other public safety partners to better inform and provide necessary resources to families throughout California.

Tragically, more than half of the children under 16 years old in California who died in crashes in 2013 were not properly restrained. Even though child-passenger safety recommendations and California laws evolve to keep children in age- and size- appropriate car and booster seats, it remains difficult for parents to stay up-to-date on exactly what the law is and how to implement it in order to keep their children optimally protected. "Parents need ongoing reminders to use a top tether with forward facing and LATCH-installed car seats, and to exercise extra vigilance for older children in vehicles for field trips, after school sports, and carpools, to make sure they sit in the rear and do not unbuckle or place the shoulder strap behind their backs," states Dr. Chapman.

California law requires that children up to age eight ride in a booster seat. All children - infants and toddlers in their car seats and kids in boosters – must be seated in the back seat. It also continues to require that all children ages 0 -16 years be properly restrained in a child safety or booster seat, or the vehicle restraint system. Booster seats should be used until a child is tall enough for the vehicle's safety belts to fit properly over the strong bones of the child's body (when the shoulder belt crosses the center of the chest and the lap portion fits snug over the hips). For more child passenger safety information, visit www.cdph.ca.gov/vosp

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